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YOUR CHILD AND THE INTERNET

The web has many rich educational and cultural resources to offer your child. However, it is also contains sites that promote hatred, bigotry, violence and drugs or contain sexually explicit material.

BROWSING THE INTERNET

What Parents Can Do:

- Keep your computer in a family area to better monitor your child's activities.
- Regularly spend time on-line with your child to learn about his or her activities.
- Use filtering software to control access to the Internet and to applications on your computer. Set filters to prohibit computer users from visiting certain sites on the Internet unless a password is entered. Check out www.getnetwise.org for more information.
- Teach your child how to promptly log-off if he or she feels uncomfortable or scared by an online experience. Establish an atmosphere of trust with your child by not blaming him or her for uncomfortable online experiences.
- Discuss the difference between advertising, educational or entertaining content.
- Report sites that do not comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

EMAIL

Sending and receiving messages by electronic mail can help your child keep in touch with teachers, family and friends. Your child can make world-wide pen pals, get help with homework and practice writing. However, strangers, pretending to be someone else, can also communicate with your child. Your child may receive unsolicited email ("spam") about web sites with explicit material, products for sale, or moneymaking schemes.

What Parents Can Do:

- Teach your child to **NEVER** share personal information about themselves or other family members with anyone on the computer.
- Know your child's password or share an e-mail account and look at what he or she is doing on line.
- Talk to your child about the people he or she contacts online.
- Insist that your child never arranges an in-person meeting without you present.
- Complain to your Internet Service Provider about unwanted email. Adjust the settings on the junk mail filter on your computer to filter out unwanted mail.
- Instruct your child to never respond to offensive or obtrusive messages and assure your child that he or she is not to blame for getting these kinds of messages.

CHAT ROOMS

Chatting online means reading messages from others as they are typing them, usually in theme-specific chat rooms. Your child can communicate instantly with family, friends and teachers. Be aware of the risks your child may be exposed to in chat rooms including offensive language and adult conversation. Because of the interactive nature of chatting, it is the online activity through which children are most likely to encounter someone who may want to harm them.

What Parents Can Do:

- Teach your child **NEVER** to give out personal information such as his or her name, address, phone number, school name, or anything else that is personally identifying.
- Explain that people are not always who they say they are.
- Limit your child to specific chat rooms or consider blocking out chat rooms entirely.
- Set a rule that your child never arranges an in-person meeting without you present.

CHILDREN'S ONLINE PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

The Federal Trade Commission has rules for website operators to protect children's privacy as required by the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Here's a summary from the FTC:

Website Operators Must:

Post their privacy policy.

Websites directed to children or that knowingly collect information from kids under 13 must post a notice of their information collection practices that includes:

- types of personal information they collect from children, for example, name, home address, email address or hobbies.
- how the site will use the information, for example, to market to a child who supplies the information, to notify contest winners or to make the information available through a child's participation in a chat room.
- whether personal information is forwarded to advertisers or other third parties.
- a contact at the site.

Get parental consent.

In many cases, sites must obtain parental consent before collecting, using or disclosing personal information about children. Consent is not required when a site collects an email address to:

- respond to a one-time request from the child.
- provide notice to the parent.
- ensure the safety of the child or the site.
- send a newsletter or other information on a regular basis as long as the site notifies a parent and gives them a chance to say no to the arrangement.

Parents Should:**Look for the privacy policy on any website directed to children.**

The policy must be available through a link on the website's homepage and at each area where personal information is collected from children. Websites for general audiences that have a children's section must post the notice on the homepages of the section for children.

Read the policy closely to learn the kinds of personal information being collected, how it will be used, and whether it will be passed on to third parties. If a website doesn't post basic protections for children's personal information, ask for details of their information collection practices. Report websites that refuse to give you information to the FTC at www.ftc.gov or toll-free by calling (877) FTC-HELP.